

8 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Pursuant to the requirements of CEQA and NEPA, the Authority and the FRA as lead agencies have conducted a public and agency involvement program as part of the program environmental review process. This chapter describes the public and agency involvement efforts conducted in the preparation of this Program EIR/EIS. The public and agency involvement program included the following efforts.

- Public involvement and outreach—informational materials, including region-specific fact sheets; information and scoping meetings including town hall meetings; public and agency scoping meetings, meetings with individuals and groups, presentations and briefings.
- Agency involvement—agency scoping meetings, interagency working group, other agency consultation.
- Notification and circulation of the Program EIR/EIS.

8.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH

8.1.1 Public Information

A. MAILING LIST

A mailing list database was developed and used to provide information and announcements concerning the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS to the public. The database was based on an existing Authority contact list and includes more than 15,500 entries of federal, state, and local agency representatives; elected officials; property owners; interested persons; and interested organizations. The mailing list was updated to include public meeting participants and others who asked to be added. This list was used to provide notification of scoping events. The mailing list does not represent the distribution list for the Program EIR/EIS, which is presented in Chapter 11.

B. PUBLICATIONS AND MATERIALS

During the scoping phase, fact sheets were developed on various topics. The general fact sheet regarding scoping meetings was translated into Spanish and Chinese. Individual fact sheets covering the following general topics were compiled.

- Dates and agendas of scoping meetings.
- Role and responsibilities of the California High Speed Rail Authority.
- Project description.
- Project purpose and need and objectives, and project alternatives.
- Preliminary alignment and station options in the five regions.
- Types of high-speed trains being considered.
- Typical cross sections of high-speed train alternatives.
- Environmental review process.
- Environmental issues and technical studies.
- Visual and aesthetic resources potentially affected by the project.
- Noise and vibration, resources potentially affected by the project.

C. CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY WEB SITE

During the program environmental review process, project information and announcements have been posted on the Authority's Web site (www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov). The Authority uses the Web site to make public documents widely available. The site includes information on high-speed trains, a proposed route map from the Authority's final business plan (California High Speed Rail Authority 2002), newsletters, press releases, board of director meeting information, recent developments and new information regarding status of the environmental review process ("What's new?"), information to contact the Authority, and related links. The scoping reports and the alternatives screening reports and public materials, in addition to other reports, have also been made available on the Web site. The Web site is generally updated monthly.

8.1.2 Public Meetings

The Authority and the FRA held both informal and formal public meetings during the EIR/EIS preparation process. Various meeting formats (e.g., open house, formal presentation, and question and comment session) were used to present information and provide opportunities for input by participants. Numerous briefings, presentations, and small group meetings were included in the process. (See Chapter 9, *Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach*, for a list of meetings in addition to those noted here.) There were four general categories of public meetings: town hall meetings, public and agency scoping meetings, Authority governing board meetings, and presentations and briefings to interested groups.

A. TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Fifteen informal town hall meetings were held between February 5, 2001 and March 29, 2001, to inform the public about the EIR/EIS preparation process and the subsequent more formal public and agency scoping process. The town hall meetings included a presentation on the proposed HST system and alternatives, the environmental review process, and ways to participate in the Program EIR/EIS preparation process, along with a question-and-answer session with Authority staff and consultants. Meetings were announced through direct mail, a press release, and an announcement posted on the Authority's Web site. Approximately 538 people attended the town hall meetings. A summary of the meetings and input received is presented in *Outcome Report: Town Hall Meetings—August 1, 2001*. The places and dates of the town hall meetings are listed below.

- California State University, Sacramento—February 5, 2001.
- California Pubic Utilities Commission—February 5, 2001.
- California State University, Hayward—February 8, 2001.
- California State University, Stanislaus—February 12, 2001.
- California Sate University, Fresno—February 15, 2001.
- San Jose State University—February 15, 2001.
- California State University, Bakersfield—February 26, 2001.
- Palmdale City Hall—March 1, 2001.
- California State University, Northridge—Mach 5, 2001.
- California State University, Los Angeles—March 8, 2001.
- California State University, Fullerton—March 12, 2001.
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona—March 15, 2001.
- California Sate University, San Bernardino—March 19, 2001.

- California State University, San Marcos—March 22, 2001.
- San Diego State University—March 29, 2001.

B. PUBLIC AND AGENCY SCOPING MEETINGS

Seventeen public and agency scoping meetings were held between April 25, 2001 and May 23, 2001. In most locations, one meeting was conducted during the day and one during the evening to accommodate agency representatives and the general public. Meetings generally began with an informal open house and exhibit display followed by a presentation and comment session. Comments were documented and are summarized below by region and in the *Final Statewide Scoping Report, December 14, 2001*. Agendas, fact sheets, and scoping period comment sheets were provided. The federal notice of intent was published in the Federal Register on May 2, 2001, and the state notice of preparation was issued on April 6, 2001. Direct mail announcements of the public scoping meetings were sent to the 15,500 persons listed in the database, and the scoping meetings were announced on the Authority's Web site. Approximately 400 people participated in the formal scoping meetings. The places and dates of the public and agency scoping meetings are listed below.

- Sacramento: State Resources Building—April 24, 2001, 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Oakland: Oakland City Hall—April 25, 2001, 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
- Bakersfield: Kern County Administration Building—April 30, 2001, 3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.
- Los Angeles: Japanese/American National Museum—May 2, 2001, 4:00 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.
- Fresno: Fresno City Hall—May 7, 2001, 3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.
- Riverside: Riverside Convention Center—May 8, 2001, 6:30 p.m.
- San Diego: San Diego Association of Governments—May 10, 2001, 2:30 p.m., University Towne Centre, 6:00 p.m.
- Modesto: Modesto City/County Admin. Bldg.—May 14, 2001, 3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.
- San Jose: Berger Drive Facility, Auditorium—May 15, 2001, 1:30 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.
- Irvine: Irvine Civic Center—May 23, 2001, 3:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.

In addition to the formal scoping meetings, other presentations, briefings, and workshops were held during the scoping process. Workshops were attended primarily by public agencies and other representative local organizations. Notification of the workshops was provided by telephone and fax to local/regional agency and organization representatives. Chapter 9, *Persons and Organizations Contacted*, includes a list of the additional meetings held as part of the Authority's outreach effort, both during and subsequent to scoping. Comments from these scoping workshops and meetings are summarized in the *Scoping Reports, July 2001* for each of the five regions (Bay Area to Merced, Sacramento to Bakersfield, Bakersfield to Los Angeles, Los Angeles to San Diego via Inland Empire, and Los Angeles to San Diego via Orange County).

C. CALIFORNIA HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY BOARD MEETINGS

The Authority governing board typically holds monthly meetings. Board meetings are held in different locations to encourage participation from agencies and the general public in multiple areas of the state. The board meetings held during the program environmental review process regularly included status reports on the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS and provided opportunities for public comment. Authority board meetings are announced by posting on the Authority's Web site and by mailing to approximately 1,600 persons and organizations. Board meeting minutes are also

posted on the Web site. The places and dates of the meetings of the Authority's board meetings are listed below.

- Oakland—April 25, 2001.
- Los Angeles—June 20, 2001.
- San Jose—August 1, 2001.
- Los Angeles—September 19, 2001.
- Burbank—October 26, 2001.
- Bakersfield—November 14, 2001.
- Sacramento—January 16, 2002.
- San Diego—February 20, 2002.
- San Francisco—March 20, 2002.
- San Bernardino—April 17, 2002.
- Oakland—May 15, 2002.
- Anaheim—June 19, 2002.
- San Jose—July 17, 2002.
- Fresno—August 21, 2002.
- Los Angeles—September 18, 2002.
- Sacramento—October 16, 2002.
- Bakersfield—November 20, 2002.
- San Francisco—January 28, 2003.
- Los Angeles—February 25, 2003.
- Irvine—May 27, 2003.
- Oakland—June 24, 2003.
- Los Angeles—July 22, 2003.

D. PRESENTATIONS, BRIEFINGS, AND OUTREACH

During the program environmental review process, presentations to conferences, forums, local and regional government agencies, interest groups and organizations, as well as agency meetings and other briefings, have been conducted to provide general information concerning the proposed HST system and the program environmental review process. Interest groups included non-governmental organizations (e.g., the Sierra Club), community planning organizations (e.g., San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association [SPUR]), and public interest discussion/research groups (e.g., Los Angeles Town Hall). The state, regional, and local groups that participated in this aspect of the Authority and FRA outreach effort are listed in Chapter 9.

8.2 AGENCY CONSULTATION

8.2.1 Agency Scoping

In addition to the statewide scoping meeting held in Sacramento on April 24, 2001, scoping meetings and informal roundtable/workshop meetings were conducted with many public agencies. Many of the agency contacts made during the scoping process led to subsequent one-on-one and small group agency consultation meetings during the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS.

8.2.2 Interagency Consultation

The Authority and the FRA convened staff representatives from 27 interested federal and state agencies to provide input on the environmental review process. Six federal agencies (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], Federal Aviation Administration [FAA], Federal Transit Administration [FTA], Federal Highway Administration [FHWA], and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]) were designated cooperating agencies under NEPA for the preparation of the Program EIR/EIS, as reflected in a memorandum of understanding among these agencies and the FRA. There were nine consultation meetings: April 24, 2001; September 26, 2001; May 8, 2002; June 26, 2002; September 12, 2002; December 17, 2002; March 12, 2003; May 28, 2003; and July 23, 2003.

The federal cooperating agencies and the lead agencies also met on six occasions: May 8, 2002; September 12, 2002; December 17, 2002; March 11, 2003; May 28, 2003; and July 23, 2003.

8.2.3 Other Agency Consultation

In addition to the scoping process and interagency staff meetings, agency consultation has taken place at the state and regional levels. For example, the Authority participated in a workshop hosted by the San Diego Area Governments (SANDAG), which a number of regional jurisdictions attended. Chapter 9, *Organization, Agency, and Business Outreach*, lists these additional briefings.

The Authority met with EPA and USACE for purposes of NEPA 404 consultation on July 9, 2002. The FRA also participated in meetings with the Authority, EPA, and USACE on September 12, 2002, December 16, 2002, and December 10, 2003.

The Authority met with staff of the State Historic Preservation Office on October 23, 2002 to define the area of potential effect for the archaeology and historic property evaluation and to discuss the method of analysis proposed for this Program EIR/EIS.

The FRA and the Authority also initiated consultation with the Native American Heritage Commission for a search of their Sacred Lands file and lists of Native American contacts. The contacts were sent letters providing information about the proposed project alternatives and requesting information about any traditional cultural properties that could be affected by the project. The Authority also met with tribal representatives on September 9, 2003, at Frazier Park in the Tehachapi Mountains, on September 10, 2003, at the San Luis Recreation Area in Gustine, and on October 9, 2003, at the Temecula Community Center.

8.3 SCOPING SUMMARY

The scoping process helped the lead agencies identify general environmental issues to be addressed in this Program EIR/EIS. The public and agency comments identified support for and interest in the proposed high-speed train system in the general corridors to be studied, and indicated the need for the proposed system to be connected to existing transportation systems. Providing potential freight service was also frequently mentioned. Concerns regarding environmental issues typically focused on potential

noise and visual impacts, safety issues, potential impacts on air quality and sensitive habitats, and the potential for growth inducement. In addition to these issues, comments and concerns specific to each region are summarized below.

8.3.1 Bay Area to Merced

In the East Bay and Peninsula corridors, comments suggested the need to consider improving existing passenger rail services in existing corridors with compatible/consistent technologies versus adding new dedicated rights-of-way and services. Support was expressed for station locations at the proposed new Transbay Terminal in San Francisco and in downtown Oakland. The comments identified the need for the project to be sensitive to such environmental issues as noise, visual impacts, safety, impacts on wildlife refuges, and effects of induced growth. Concerns were raised regarding train speeds in urban areas. Some comments suggested including Altamont Pass in the study.

8.3.2 Sacramento to Bakersfield

Generally, the public and agency comments on an HST system in the Central Valley identified strong support for using existing rail corridors as much as possible to minimize disruption in the urban cores, as well as to minimize impacts on agricultural lands in the Central Valley. Many comments indicated a greater need for high-speed rail in the Central Valley than in other areas of the state because of limited air service into and out of the Central Valley cities. The most frequently mentioned environmental issues were preserving agricultural lands, contributing to improved air quality, and limiting potential impacts on future growth patterns.

8.3.3 Bakersfield to Los Angeles

The majority of those commenting on the HST system in this region viewed the Palmdale alignment (either through the Palmdale airport or the Transportation Center) as the preferred alignment. The I-5/Grapevine alignment was less preferred because of the extensive tunneling proposed, the seismic instability in the area, and the costs and uncertainty associated with tunnel construction. Comments expressed concern over the possible effects of the project, including adverse impacts on surrounding land uses, recreational areas, and agricultural lands, as well as general safety issues.

8.3.4 Los Angeles to San Diego via Inland Empire

In the inland corridor, two different lines of comments were presented: that the alignments should focus on corridors with the densest population, and that the alignments should focus on open land areas where greater opportunities for growth and development may exist. Comments from agencies indicated a concern that proposed stations should be located where transit-oriented land use, accessibility, and parking needs could be accommodated. Many comments suggested that this inland corridor should be connected to downtown San Diego. Comments pertaining to environmental concerns focused on visual impacts, impacts on floodplains/wetlands and sensitive habitats, noise impacts, traffic impacts, and possible growth-inducing impacts.

8.3.5 Los Angeles to San Diego via Orange County

Public and agency views on the relationship of high-speed trains and connectivity to LAX were varied and conflicting as to whether this would relieve or increase development pressures at LAX. Concerns about the existing LOSSAN rail corridor focused on the need to improve existing services rather than add new dedicated rights-of-way and services. Comments suggested the I-15 corridor would be better suited to dedicated high-speed services. Many comments identified support for grade separation, but concerns were raised over the potential impacts of 200-mph train speeds on the existing communities along the LOSSAN corridor. Comments on environmental issues focused on potential visual, air quality, and noise impacts; compatibility with existing and planned land uses; impacts on sensitive lagoon and wetland

areas; and safety. The potential impacts of an overhead catenary power supply system on views along the coast were noted. Impairment of or impacts on recreational facilities, or access to these facilities, was also raised as a concern.

8.4 NOTIFICATION AND CIRCULATION OF THE DRAFT PROGRAM EIR/EIS

Notice regarding the availability and the circulation of this Draft Program EIR/EIS will be provided pursuant to CEQA and NEPA requirements. Notice will include publication in newspapers of general circulation in areas potentially affected by the proposed HST system of an announcement indicating the availability of the Draft Program EIR/EIS and the period during which public comment will be received. An announcement will be mailed to those on the mailing list. A notice of completion indicating the availability of the Draft Program EIR/EIS will be filed with the State Clearinghouse and sent to state agencies. EPA will publish a notice of availability for the Draft Program EIR/EIS in the Federal Register.

The Draft Program EIR/EIS is being circulated among federal, state, and local agencies, regional transportation agencies, and organizations and persons who have expressed an interest. The Draft Program EIR/EIS is available on the Authority's Web site and on compact disc upon request. A notice of public hearings or meetings to comment on the Draft Program EIR/EIS will be issued and posted on the Web site. A distribution list for the Draft Program EIR/EIS is provided in Chapter 11.